

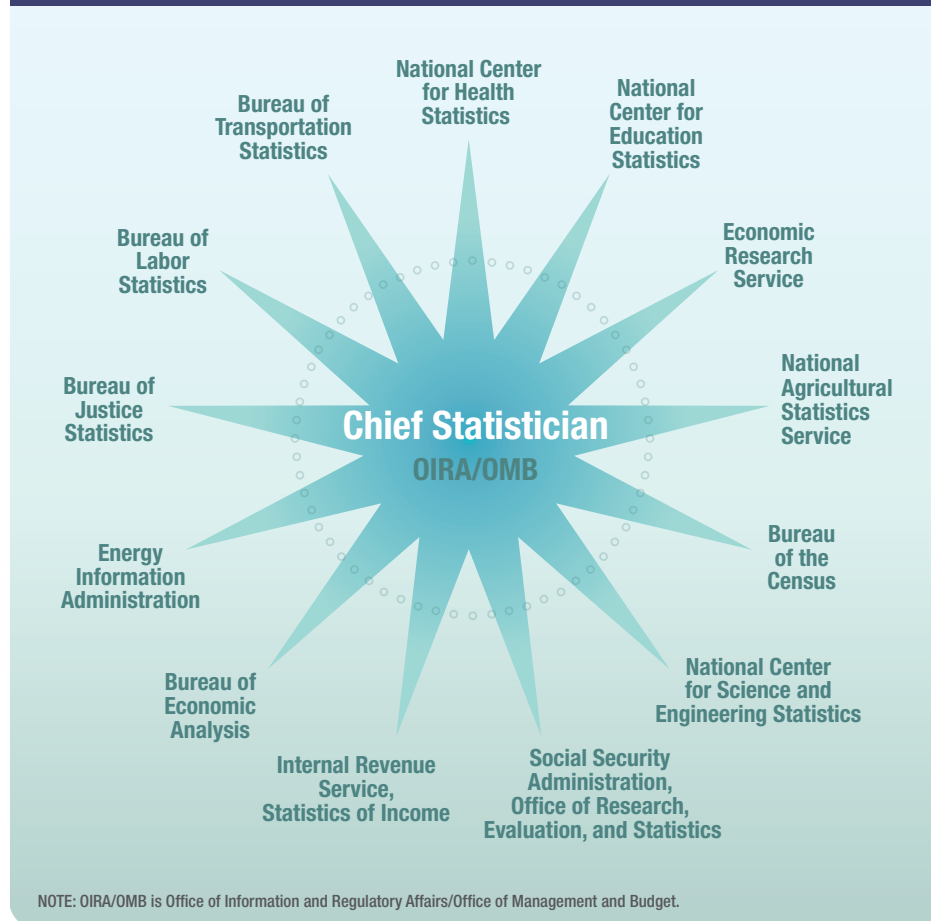
# The Federal Statistical System

## What is a federal statistical agency?

The U.S. federal statistical system is composed of the 13 principal federal statistical agencies (see Figure), each of which has a principal mission to produce a substantial portion of official federal statistics. The Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) coordinates the nation's decentralized federal statistical system through the Interagency Council on Statistical Policy (ICSP), which enables the exchange of information about statistical programs and activities. Within this system, the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) functions as the federal agency responsible for the collection and dissemination of the nation's vital and health statistics.

Federal statistical agencies are charged with providing relevant, accurate, and timely data to inform public and private decision making. To meet this charge, agencies rely on the *Principles and Practices for a Federal Statistical Agency* developed by the National Research Council (NRC) of the National Academies to guide their strategic planning, daily operations, and interactions with stakeholders. Agencies embrace a common set of professional standards and operational practices designed to ensure the quality, integrity, and credibility of their statistical activities. This allows them to provide objective information that is relevant to issues of public policy. Independence is key to maintaining the trust of those who provide and use the information. Actual or perceived violations of any of these principles undermines the scientific integrity of, and public confidence in, the data produced by principal statistical agencies.

## Current U.S. federal statistical system



## About NCHS

NCHS is the nation's principal health statistics agency, providing data to identify and address health issues. NCHS compiles statistical information to help guide public health and health policy decisions.

## Secretarial designation

By statute, the NCHS director is appointed by the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). While the NCHS director reports to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) regarding NCHS operations, the director reports directly to the Secretary of HHS as a senior advisor on health statistics. The NCHS director is co-chair of the HHS Data Council, which is the principal advisory body to the Secretary on health and human services data policy.

